POEMS

ON

1340. g. 2
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Several Subjects:

Written by

STEPHEN DUCK,

Lately a poor *Thresher* in a Barn in the County of *Wilts*, at the Wages of Four Shillings and Six Pence *per* Week:

Which were publickly Read by

The Right Honourable the Earl of *Macclesfield*, in the Drawing-Room at *Windsor*-Castle, on *Friday* the 11th of *September*, 1730. to Her MAJESTY:

Who was thereupon most graciously pleased to take the Author into her Royal Protection, by allowing him a Salary of Thirty Pounds *per Annum*, and a small House at *Richmond* in *Surrey*, to live in, for the better Support of Himself and Family.

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THE SHUNAMITE.

DEIGN, Heavenly Muſes, to aſſiſt my Song:
To Heavenly Muſes Heavenly Themes belong.
But chiefly Thou, O GOD, my Soul inſpire,
And touch my Lips with thy Celeſtial Fire:
If Thou delight'ſt in flow'ry *Carmel*'s Shade,
Or *Jordan*'s Stream, from thence I crave thy Aid:
Inſtruct my Tongue, and my low Accents raiſe,
To ſing thy Wonders, and diſplay thy Praiſe;
And make th' Inhabitants of *Judah*'s Land
Give Ear, and *Iſrael* to my Voice attend.

Thus when the *Shunamite* had made her Prayer,
The Crouds promiſcuous throng'd around to hear
Th' amazing Tale; while thus her joyful Tongue,
Mov'd by the Heavenly Power, began the Song.

Attend, ye Seed of *Abram*, and give ear,
Whilſt I *Jehovah*'s Glorious Acts declare:
From that great Source of Power what Wonders ſpring,
If he aſſiſt my Lays, my Muſe ſhall ſing.
My Lord and I, to whom all-bounteous Heaven
His Bleſſings with no ſparing Hand had given,
Like faithful Stewards of our wealthy Store,
Still lodg'd the Stranger, and reliev'd the Poor.
And as *Eliſha*, by divine Command,
Came preaching Virtue to a ſinful Land,
He often deign'd to lodge within our Gate,
And oft receiv'd an hoſpitable Treat;
A decent Chamber we for him prepar'd;
And he, the generous Labour to reward,
Honours in Camp or Court to us propos'd,
Which I refus'd, and thus my Mind diſclos'd:
Heaven's King hath plac'd us in a fertile Land,
Where he ſhowers down his Gifts with copious Hand;
Already we enjoy an affluent Store,
Why ſhould we be ſollicitous for more?
Give Martial Camps, and Kingly Courts to them
Who place their only Bliſs in fleeting Fame;

There let them live in golden Chains of State,
And be Unhappy, only to be Great.
But let us in our Native Soil remain,
Nor barter Happineſs for ſordid Gain.
Here we may feed the Indigent in Peace,
And cloath the Bare with the ſuperfluous Fleece,
And give the weary fainting Pilgrim Eaſe.
This we prefer to Pomp, and formal Show,
Which only ſerves to varniſh o'er our Woe;
Refulgent Ornaments, which dreſs the Proud,
Objects of Wonder to the gazing Crowd;
Yet ſeldom give Content, or ſolid Reſt
To the vain Man by whom they are poſſeſs'd.

All Bleſſings, but a Child, had Heaven ſupply'd,
And only that, the Almighty had deny'd;
Which, when made known to the Prophetic Seer,
He ſaid, and I before him did appear,
And the firſt moment I approach'd the Room,
He gravely roſe, and did new Looks aſſume;
Not ſuch a Wildneſs and fanatic Mien,
With which, ſome ſay, the *Delphic* Prieſts are ſeen,
When they for Myſteries of *Fate* explain
The odd *Chimæra's* of a frantic Brain;
But with a grave Majeſtic Air he ſtood,
And more than Human in his Aſpect glow'd:
Celeſtial Grace ſat on his radiant Look,
And Power diffuſive ſhone before he ſpoke.

Then

Then Thus: Hail, generous Soul! thy pious Cares
Are not forgot, nor fruitleſs are thy Prayers:
Propitious Heav'n, thy virtuous Deeds to crown,
Shall make thy barren Womb conceive a Son.
So ſpake the Seer, and to complete my Joy,
As he had ſaid, I bore the promis'd Boy.
Soon to my Friends the welcome News was known,
Who crouded in a-pace to view my Son;
Surpriz'd, to hear my unexpected Bliſs,
And each rejoices for my Happineſs.
When all had ſaid, I mov'd my joyful Tongue,
And thus, to God, addreſs'd my grateful Song.

O God! What Eloquence can ſing thy Praiſe;
Or who can fathom thy ſtupendous Ways?
All things obey at thy Divine Command,
Thou mak'ſt a fruitful Field of barren Land;
Th' obdurate Rock a fertile Glebe ſhall be,
And bring forth copious Crops, if bid by Thee;
Arabia's Deſert ſhall with Plenty ſmile,
And fruitful Vines adorn th' uncultivated Soil.

As thus ſhe ſpake, her Audience raiſe their Voice,
And interrupt her Song, as they rejoice.
O God! we gladly hear thy mighty Power,
And joyfully thy gracious Name adore:
All Nature is ſubſervient to thy Word,
And ſhifts her wonted Courſe t'obey her Lord.

We, for thy Servant's Joy, our Thanks expreſs;
As grows the Child, ſo let her Bliſs increaſe;
And may thy Delegate, who did preſide
Over his Native Hour, his Actions guide!
And, Ye protecting Angels, that do ſtill
Wait round the Bleſs'd, preſerve him from all Ill;
Inſpire his Soul with Virtue whilſt on Earth,
And be his watchful Guardians until Death,
Then ſafely bear——The Dame here wav'd her Hand,
The People ſtraight obey the mute Command:
All ſilent ſtand, and all attentive look,
Waiting her Words, while thus ſhe mournful ſpoke.

All Pleaſures are imperfect here below;
And while we wait our growing Happineſs,
Some ſudden Grief deſtroys the riſing Bliſs.
E'er Fourteen Years were meaſur'd by my Son,
(So ſoon, alas! the greateſt Bleſſing's gone.)
He in the Harveſt to the Reapers goes,
To view the bearded Sheaves erect in Rows;
Like an embattled Army in the Field;
(A new delightful Proſpect to the Child!)
But either there the ſcorching Sun diſplay'd
His Heat intenſe, and on his Vitals prey'd;
Or ſudden Blaſt, or Apoplectic Pain,
With racking Torture ſeiz'd his tender Brain;
His Spirits fail'd, he ſtraight began to faint,
And vainly to his Father made complaint.

The glowing Roſe was quickly ſeen to fade,
At once, his Beauty and his Life decay'd.

Soon, at my Houſe, the diſmal News I heard;
Soon, at my Houſe, the dying Child appear'd.
T'embrace him I with fond Affection run,
And O! ſaid I, what Pain afflicts my Son?
He try'd to ſpeak; but fault'ring, gave a Groan:
No perfect Word proceeded from his Tongue,
But on his Life the broken Accents hung.

All means I us'd that might allay his Pain,
And ſtrove to give him Eaſe, but ſtrove in vain:
Short, and more ſhort he drew his roſy Breath,
Too ſure Preſage of his approaching Death.
The Blood congeal'd, the heaving Heart beat low;
And his Head dropt with a declining Bow:
Thrice from my Breaſt to raiſe himſelf he try'd,
And thrice ſunk down again, and groaning, dy'd.

Thus, when with Care we have nurs'd a beauteous Vine,
And taught the docile Branches where to twine:
An eaſtern Gale, or ſome pernicious Froſt,
Nips the young Tree, and all our Labour's loſt.

With Horror chill'd, a-while aghaſt I ſtood
Viewing the Child, and trembling as I view'd:

My

My Eyes diſcharg'd their humid Store apace,
And Tear ſucceeded Tear a-down my Face:
Scarce my dilated Heart the Grief ſuſtain'd;
At length, recovering Speech, I thus complain'd.

O fleeting Joys, inconſtant as the Wind,
That only for a Moment pleaſe the Mind,
Then fly, and leave a Weight of Woe behind!
But yet in vain I thus lament and mourn,
The Soul once fled ſhall never more return;
And the fair Body now muſt be convey'd
To Earth's dark Boſom, and eternal Shade.
Yet let me not preſcribe a Bound to Heaven,
'Twas by a Miracle the Child was given;
Nor can I think the Wonder is more great,
If the departed Soul reſumes her Seat.
What if I to *Mount Carmel* haſte away,
To him who did his myſtick Birth diſplay?
His powerful Word the Barren fruitful made;
His powerful Word, perhaps, may raiſe the Dead.
The famous *Tiſhbite* rais'd a Widow's Son;
Eliſha has as wondrous Actions done.
When he to *Jordan*'s rapid Torrent came,
He with the Mantle ſmote th' impetuous Stream;
Obſequious to the Stroke, the Waves divide,
And raiſe a liquid Wall on either Side.

At *Jericho*, long had the barren Soil
Deceiv'd the Husbandman, and mock'd his Toil;
Yet at his Word it grew a fertile Field,
And pois'nous Springs did wholeſome Waters yield.

Nor can he only ſuch great Bleſſings ſend,
But Curſes, if invok'd, on him attend:
Elſe how at *Bethel* call'd he Vengeance down,
As a juſt Scourge on the opprobrious Town?

Again, when *Moab* Peace with *Iſrael* broke,
And vainly ſtrove to quit the ſervile Yoke;
Our powerful Kings led forth th' embattled Hoſt
Thro' *Edom*'s ſultry Wilds and Air aduſt,
Where the Confed'rate Troops no Water found;
Dry were the Springs, and ſteril was the Ground:
The Captains wanted Strength, and Courage fail'd,
When Thirſt and Foes at once the Hoſt aſſail'd.
The Kings to him their joint Petitions made,
And fainting Soldiers crav'd his timely Aid;
Nor crav'd in vain: The pow'rful Word he ſpake,
And flowing Waters form'd a ſpacious Lake;
The ſhining Streams advance their humid Train,
And *Edom*'s Wilds ſoon grow a liquid Plain.
Not in more plenty did the Waters run
Out of the Rock, when ſtruck by *Amram*'s Son.

And who can that amazing Act forget,
Which he perform'd to pay the Widow's Debt?
Whose quantity of Oil one Pot contain'd,
Yet num'rous Vessels fill'd before 'twas drain'd.
Then he who such stupendous Acts has done,
If God propitious prove, can raise my Son.
So saying, up I caught the Child with speed,
And laid it on the sacred Prophet's Bed;
Then call'd my Servant to prepare the Steed.
Pensive and sad, my mourning Husband said,
Fain would I from this Journey thee dissuade:
No God to-day the Prophet does inspire,
Nor can he aught reveal thou dost require.

To whom thus I:
Rather than sink, attempt my Hopes to raise,
Tell me no more of Ceremonial Days,
His God is present still, and hears him when he prays.

Thus said: Urging my Steed with eager haste,
Swift as the Mountain Roe, the Plains I past;
O'er Hills and Dales my Journey I pursu'd,
Nor slack'd my Pace till flow'ry *Carmel* view'd;
On whose delightful Brow, in cool Retreat
Among the curling Vines, the Prophet sat;
Whose twining Arms a beauteous Arbour made;
The beauteous Arbour form'd a grateful Shade;

The fanning *Zephyrs* gently play'd around,
And ſhook the trembling Leaves, and ſwept the Ground.
Down humbly at his Feet I proſtrate fell,
Submiſs, and, weeping, told the mournful Tale.

Calm and compoſe thy anxious Mind, ſaid he,
Tears can't revoke th' Almighty's fix'd Decree.
We live and die, and both as he thinks fit;
He may command, but Mortals muſt ſubmit.
Death is a Debt we all to Nature owe,
And not an Evil, but when counted ſo.
Yet if of Heaven I can my Suit obtain,
Thy Child ſhall live, and thou rejoice again.
Thus ſaid, with Looks divine his Staff he views,
As if ſome powerful Charm he wou'd infuſe;
Then calls his Servant haſtily, and ſaid,
On the Child's Face ſee this diſcreetly laid.
Th' obſequious Servant his Command obey'd.

O Thou, ſaid I, on whom my Hope depends,
Do not tranſfer this Work to Servants Hands!
If thou thy ſelf refuſe with me to go,
Here to the liſt'ning Vines I'll vent my Woe;
Still proſtrate lie, lamenting for my Son,
'Till every Hill prove vocal to my Moan.
More had I ſaid, but Grief the Words ſuppreſs'd;
Yet Sighs and ſilent Tears explain'd the reſt.

At length he from his verdant Seat aroſe,
And haſtily adown the Mountain goes
To *Shunem*; we with ſpeed our way purſue,
The City ſoon appears within our View;
And the returning Servant at the Gate,
Penſive and ſad without Succeſs, we met:
The beauteous Child by Death ſtill vanquiſh'd lay;
Still Death inſulted o'er the beauteous Prey:
'Till to the Houſe the ſacred Seer was come,
And with ſupernal Power approach'd the Room.

By the dead Child a-while he penſive ſtood,
Then from the Chamber put the mourning Croud:
That done, to God he made his ardent Prayer,
And breath'd upon the Child with vital Air:
And now the Soul reſumes her priſtine Seat,
And now the Heart begins again to beat;
A ſecond Life diffuſes o'er the Dead,
And Death, repuls'd, inglorious doth recede.

Thus when a prowling Wolf hath ſtoln a Lamb,
He ſternly guards it from the bleating Dam;
But if the Keeper comes, he quits his Prey,
And, lowing, with reluctance makes away.

And now the Prophet to my longing Arms
Reſigns the Child, with more than wonted Charms;
The bluſhy Roſe ſhone freſher in his Face,
And Beauty ſmil'd with a ſuperiour Grace.

So

So when Heaven's Lamp that rules the genial Day,
Behind the ſable Moon purſues his way,
Affrighted Mortals, when th' Eclipſe is o'er,
Believe him more illuſtrious than before.

Here ends the Dame, and the promiſcuous Throng,
With Hallelujahs thus conclude the Song:
Righteous and Good art Thou, Lord God of Hoſt,
And all thy Works are wonderful and juſt;
Both Life and Death are in thy powerful Hand;
Both Life and Death obey thy great Command:
By Thy great Power the Heavens and Earth are aw'd,
Then let the Heavens and Earth adore their God.
Thou glorious Sun, that meaſur'ſt all our Days,
Riſing and Setting, ſtill advance his Praiſe.
Thou Moon, and ye leſs glitt'ring Orbs that dance
Round this Terreſtrial Globe, his Praiſe advance:
Ye liquid Seas, ſtill waving to and fro,
Praiſe when ye ebb, and praiſe him when ye flow:
Ye wandring Rivers, and each purling Stream,
As ye purſue your Courſe, his Praiſe proclaim:
Ye Dews, and Miſts, and humid Vapours, all
Praiſe when ye riſe, and praiſe him when ye fall;
But chiefly *Iſrael*, who ſo oft do'ſt view
His powerful Works, his daily Praiſe renew.

The THRESHER'S LABOUR.

THE grateful Tribute of theſe rural Lays,
Which to her Patron's Hand the Muſe conveys,
Deign to accept; 'tis juſt She Tribute bring
To Him whoſe Bounty gives her Life to ſing:
To Him whoſe generous Favours tune her Voice,
And bid her 'midſt her Poverty rejoice.
Inſpir'd by Theſe, ſhe dares her ſelf prepare,
To ſing the Toils of each revolving Year:
Thoſe endleſs Toils, which always grow anew,
And the poor *Threſher's* deſtin'd to purſue;
Ev'n theſe with pleaſure can the Muſe rehearſe,
When You, and Gratitude, command the Verſe.

Soon as the Harveſt hath laid bare the Plains,
And Barns well fill'd reward the Farmer's Pains;
What Corn each Sheaf will yield, intent to hear,
And gueſs from thence the Profits of the Year;
Or elſe impending Ruin to prevent,
By paying, timely, threat'ning Landlord's Rent,
He calls his Threſhers forth: Around we ſtand,
With deep Attention waiting his Command.
To each our Tasks he readily divides,
And pointing, to our different Stations guides.

As he directs, to different Barns we go;
Here two for Wheat, and there for Barley two.
But first, to shew what he expects to find,
These Words, or Words like these, disclose his Mind:
So dry the Corn was carried from the Field,
So easily 'twill Thresh, so well 'twill Yield;
Sure large Day's Work I well may hope for now;
Come, strip, and try, let's see what you can do.
Divested of our Cloaths, with Flail in Hand,
At a just Distance, Front to Front we stand;
And first the Threshall's gently swung, to prove,
Whether with just Exactness it will move:
That once secure, more quick we whirl them round,
From the strong Planks our Crab-Tree Staves rebound,
And echoing Barns return the rattling Sound.
Now in the Air our knotty Weapons fly;
And now with equal Force descend from high:
Down one, one up, so well they keep the Time,
The *Cyclops* Hammers could not truer chime;
Nor with more heavy Strokes could *Ætna* groan,
When *Vulcan* forg'd the Arms for *Thetis'* Son.
In briny Streams our Sweat descends apace,
Drops from our Locks, or trickles down our Face.
No intermission in our Works we know;
The noisy Threshall must for ever go.
Their Master absent, others safely play;
The sleeping Threshall doth it self betray.

Nor yet the tedious Labour to beguile,
And make the paſſing Minutes ſweetly ſmile.
Can we, like Shepherds, tell a merry Tale?
The Voice is loſt, drown'd by the noiſy Flail.
But we may think——Alas! what pleaſing thing
Here to the Mind can the dull Fancy bring?
The Eye beholds no pleaſant Object here;
No chearful Sound diverts the liſt'ning Ear.
The Shepherd well may tune his Voice to ſing,
Inſpir'd by all the Beauties of the Spring:
No Fountains murmur here, no Lambkins play,
No Linets warble, and no Fields look gay;
'Tis all a dull and melancholy Scene,
Fit only to provoke the Muſes Spleen.
When ſooty Peaſe we threſh, you ſcarce can know
Our native Colour, as from Work we go;
The Sweat, and Duſt, and ſuffocating Smoke,
Make us ſo much like *Ethiopians* look:
We ſcare our Wives, when Evening brings us home;
And frighted Infants think the Bug-bear come.
Week after Week we this dull Task purſue,
Unleſs when winnowing Days produce a new;
A new indeed, but frequently a worſe,
The Threſhall yields but to the Maſter's Curſe:
He counts the Buſhels, counts how much a Day,
Then ſwears we've idled half our Time away.
Why look ye, Rogues! D'ye think that this will do?
Your Neighbours threſh as much again as you.

Now in our Hands we wiſh our noiſy Tools,
To drown the hated Names of Rogues and Fools;
But wanting thoſe, we juſt like School-boys look,
When th' angry Maſter views the blotted Book:
They cry their Ink was faulty, and their Pen;
We, The Corn threſhes bad, 'twas cut too green.
But now the Winter hides his hoary Head,
And Nature's Face is with new Beauty ſpread;
The Spring appears, and kind Refreſhing Showers
New clothe the Field with Graſs, and deck with Flowers.
Next her, the ripening Summer preſſes on,
And *Sol* begins his longeſt Stage to run:
Before the Door our welcome Maſter ſtands,
And tells us the ripe Graſs requires our Hands.
The long much-wiſh'd Intelligence imparts
Life to our Looks, and Spirit to our Hearts:
We wiſh the happy Seaſon may be fair,
And joyful, long to breathe in opener Air.
This Change of Labour ſeems to give much Eaſe;
With Thoughts of Happineſs our Joy's complete,
There's always Bitter mingled with the Sweet.
When Morn does thro' the Eaſtern Windows peep,
Strait from our Beds we ſtart, and ſhake off Sleep;
This new Employ with eager haſte to prove,
This new Employ becomes ſo much our Love:
Alas! that human Joys ſhou'd change ſo ſoon,
Even this may bear another Face at Noon!

The Birds ſalute us as to Work we go,
And a new Life ſeems in our Breaſts to glow.
A-croſs one's Shoulder hangs a Scythe well ſteel'd,
The Weapon deſtin'd to unclothe the Field:
T'other ſupports the Whetſtone, Scrip, and Beer;
That for our Scythes, and Theſe our ſelves to chear.
And now the Field deſign'd our Strength to try
Appears, and meets at laſt our longing Eye;
The Graſs and Ground each chearfully ſurveys,
Willing to ſee which way th' Advantage lays.
As the beſt Man, each claims the foremoſt Place,
And our firſt Work ſeems but a ſportive Race:
With rapid Force our well-whet Blades we drive,
Strain every Nerve, and Blow for Blow we give:
Tho' but this Eminence the Foremoſt gains,
Only t' excel the reſt in Toil and Pains.
But when the ſcorching Sun is mounted high,
And no kind Barns with friendly Shades are nigh,
Our weary Scythes entangle in the Graſs,
And Streams of Sweat run trickling down a-pace;
Our ſportive Labour we too late lament,
And wiſh that Strength again, we vainly ſpent:
Thus in the Morn a Courſer I have ſeen,
With headlong Fury ſcour the level Green,
Or mount the Hills, if Hills are in his way,
As if no Labour could his Fire allay,
Till the meridian Sun with ſultry Heat,
And piercing Beams hath bath'd his Sides in Sweat;

The lengthen'd Chace ſcarce able to ſuſtain,
He meaſures back the Hills and Dales, with pain,
With Heat and Labour tir'd, our Scythes we quit,
Search out a ſhady Tree, and down we ſit;
From Scrip and Bottle hope new Strength to gain;
But Scrip and Bottle too are try'd in vain.
Down our parch'd Throats we ſcarce the Bread can get,
And quite o'er-ſpent with Toil, but faintly eat;
Nor can the Bottle only anſwer all,
Alas! the Bottle and the Beer's too ſmall.
Our Time ſlides on, we move from off the Graſs,
And each again betakes him to his Place.
Not eager now, as late, our Strength to prove,
But all contented regular to move:
Often we whet, as often view the Sun,
To ſee how near his tedious Race is run;
At length he vails his radiant Face from ſight,
And bids the weary Traveller good-night;
Homewards we move, but ſo much ſpent with Toil,
We walk but ſlow, and reſt at every Stile.
Our good expecting Wives, who think we ſtay,
Got to the Door, ſoon eye us in the way;
Then from the Pot the Dumpling's catch'd in haſte,
And homely by its ſide the Bacon's plac'd.
Supper and Sleep by Morn new Strength ſupply,
And out we ſet again our Works to try:
But not ſo early quite, nor quite ſo faſt,
As to our Coſt we did the Morning paſt.

Soon as the riſing Sun hath drank the Dew,
Another Scene is open'd to our View:
Our Maſter comes, and at his Heels a Throng
Of prattling Females, arm'd with Rake and Prong;
Prepar'd, whil'ſt he is here, to make his Hay;
Or, if he turns his Back, prepar'd to play.
But here, or gone, ſure of this Comfort ſtill,
Here's Company, ſo they may chat their fill:
And were their Hands as active as their Tongues,
How nimbly then would move their Rakes and Prongs?
The Graſs again is ſpread upon the Ground,
Till not a vacant Place is to be found;
And while the piercing Sun-beams on it ſhine,
The Haymakers have time allow'd to dine:
That ſoon diſpatch'd, they ſtill ſit on the Ground,
And the briſk Chat renew'd, a-freſh goes round:
All talk at once, but ſeeming all to fear,
That all they ſpeak ſo well, the reſt won't hear;
By quick degrees ſo high their Notes they ſtrain,
That Standers-by can naught diſtinguiſh plain:
So loud their Speech, and ſo confus'd their Noiſe,
Scarce puzzled Echo can return a Voice;
Yet ſpite of this, they bravely all go on,
Each ſcorns to be, or ſeem to be, outdone;
Till (unobſerv'd before) a low'ring Sky,
Fraught with black Clouds, proclaims a Shower nigh;
The tattling Croud can ſcarce their Garments gain,
Before deſcends the thick impetuous Rain:

Their

Their noisy Prattle all at once is done,
And to the Hedge they all for Shelter run.

Thus have I seen on a bright Summer's Day,
On some green Brake a Flock of Sparrows play;
From Twig to Twig, from Bush to Bush they fly,
And with continu'd Chirping fill the Sky;
But on a sudden, if a Storm appears,
Their chirping Noise no longer dins your Ears;
They fly for Shelter to the thickest Bush,
There silent sit, and all at once is hush.
But better Fate succeeds this rainy Day,
And little Labour serves to make the Hay;
Fast as 'tis cut, so kindly shines the Sun,
Turn'd once or twice, the pleasing Work is done:
Next Day the Cocks appear in equal Rows,
Which the glad Master in safe Reeks bestows.

But now the Field we must no longer range,
And yet, hard Fate! still Work for Work we change.
Back to the Barns again in haste we're sent,
Where lately so much Time we pensive spent:
Not pensive now; we bless the friendly Shade,
And to avoid the parching Sun are glad.
But few Days here we're destin'd to remain,
Before our Master calls us forth again:
For Harvest now, says he, yourselves prepare,
The ripen'd Harvest now demands your Care.

Early

Early next Morn I shall disturb your Rest,
Get all things ready, and be quickly dreſt.
Strict to his Word, ſcarce the next Dawn appears,
Before his haſty Summons fills our Ears.
Obedient to his Call, ſtrait up we get,
And finding ſoon our Company complete;
With him, our Guide, we to the Wheat-Field go;
He, to appoint, and we, the Work to do.
Ye Reapers, caſt your Eyes around the Field,
And view the Scene its different Beauties yield:
Then look again with a more tender Eye,
To think how ſoon it muſt in Ruin lie.
For once ſet in, where-e'er our Blows we deal,
There's no reſiſting of the well-whet Steel:
But here or there, where-e'er our Courſe we bend,
Sure Deſolation does our Steps attend.
Thus, when *Arabia*'s Sons, in hopes of Prey,
To ſome more fertile Country take their way;
How beauteous all things in the Morn appear,
There Villages, and pleaſing Cots are here;
So many pleaſing Objects meet the Sight,
The raviſh'd Eye could willing gaze 'till Night:
But long e'er then, where-e'er their Troops have paſt,
Thoſe pleaſant Proſpects lie a gloomy Waſte.

The Morning paſt, we ſweat beneath the Sun,
And but uneaſily our Work goes on.

Before us we perplexing Thiſtles find,
And Corn blown adverſe with the ruffling Wind;
Behind our Backs the Female Gleaners wait,
Who ſometimes ſtoop, and ſometimes hold a Chat.
Each Morn we early riſe, go late to Bed,
And lab'ring hard, a painful Life we lead:
For Toils, ſcarce ever ceaſing, preſs us now,
Reſt never does, but on the Sabbath ſhow,
And barely that, our Maſter will allow.
Nor, when aſleep, are we ſecure from Pain,
We then perform our Labours o'er again;
Our mimic Fancy always reſtleſs ſcenes,
And what we act awake, ſhe acts in Dreams.
Hard Fate! Our Labours ev'n in Sleep don't ceaſe,
Scarce *Hercules* e'er felt ſuch Toils as theſe.
At length in Rows ſtands up the well-dry'd Corn,
A grateful Scene, and ready for the Barn.
Our well-pleas'd Maſter views the Sight with joy,
And we for carrying all our Force employ.
Confuſion ſoon o'er all the Field appears,
And ſtunning Clamours fill the Workmens Ears;
The Bells, and claſhing Whips, alternate ſound,
And rattling Waggons thunder o'er the Ground.
The Wheat got in, the Peaſe, and other Grain,
Share the ſame Fate, and ſoon leave bare the Plain:
In noiſy Triumph the laſt Load moves on,
And loud Huzza's proclaim the Harveſt done.

Our Maſter joyful at the welcome Sight,
Invites us all to feaſt with him at Night.
A Table plentifully ſpread we find,
And Jugs of humming Beer to cheer the Mind;
Which he, too generous, puſhes on ſo faſt,
We think no Toils to come, nor mind the paſt.
But the next Morning ſoon reveals the Cheat,
When the ſame Toils we muſt again repeat:
To the ſame Barns again muſt back return,
To labour there for room for next Year's Corn.

Thus, as the Year's revolving Courſe goes round,
No reſpite from our Labour can be found:
Like *Syſiphus*, our Work is never done,
Continually rolls back the reſtleſs Stone:
Now growing Labours ſtill ſucceed the paſt,
And growing always new, muſt always laſt.

On POVERTY.

THere is no Ill on Earth which Mortals fly
With ſo much Dread, as abject Poverty.
O deſpicable Name! We Thee to ſhun,
On every other Evil blindly run.
For fear of Thee, diſtruſtful Niggards go
In tatter'd Rags, and ſtarve their Bodies too;
And ſtill are poor, for fear of being ſo.
For fear of Thee, the Trader ſwears and vows
His Wares are good, altho' his Conſcience knows
That he hath us'd his utmoſt Art and Skill,
Their Faults and Imperfections to conceal.
The Sailor terrify'd with Thoughts of Thee,
Boldly attempts the Dangers of the Sea:
From Eaſt to Weſt, o'er Rocks and Quick-ſands ſteers,
'Tis Poverty, 'tis that alone he fears.
The Soldier too, whom nought but Thee can ſcare,
In hopes of Plunder, bravely meets the War:

To fly from Poverty, he runs on Death,
And ſhews he prizes Riches more than Breath.
Strange Terror of Mankind! by Thee miſled,
Not Conſcience, Quick-ſands, Rocks, or Death, they dread:
And yet thou art no formidable Foe,
Except to little Souls, who think Thee ſo.
'Tis only the Imagination, that
The blunted Edge of Poverty can whet.
'Tis ſervile Fear that does affright us moſt;
'Tis that transforms a Shadow to a Ghoſt.
Thus when a tim'rous Man, in Fears grown old,
Reminds the Fairy Tales his Nurſe has told;
In the dark Night he oft will ſideways ſquint,
And ſees a Gobling, when there's nothing in't.

Contented Poverty's no diſmal Thing,
Free from the Cares unwieldy Riches bring:
At diſtance both alike deceive our View,
Nearer approach'd, they take another Hue.
The poor Man's Labour reliſhes his Meat;
His Morſel's pleaſant, and his Reſt is ſweet.
The Little, Nature craves, we find with eaſe;
Too much but ſurfeits into a Diſeaſe:
And what we have, more than we can enjoy,
Inſtead of ſatisfying, does but cloy.

But ſhould we in another Proſpect take it;
Was Poverty ſo hideous as they make it;

That ſteady Man is worthy of our Praiſe,
Who in Diſtreſs, or pinch'd with Hunger, ſays,
Let Poverty, or Want, be what it will,
It does proceed from God, therefore's no Ill.
How does his great heroic Soul aſpire
Above that ſordid Wealth the reſt admire!
His noble Thoughts are fix'd on Things above,
Where by true Faith, he ſees the God of Love
Hold forth th' attractive Prize, which makes him run
His mortal Race, to gain th' immortal Crown.
Not all the Snares a crafty Dev'l can lay,
Can intercept, or ſtop him in his Way;
His God-like Soul purſues the Thing that's good,
And ſoars above the common Multitude.

Not all the ſcornful Inſults of the Proud,
Nor Cenſures of the baſe and groveling Croud:
Not Poverty, in all her Terrors dreſt,
Can ſhake the ſolid Quiet of his Breaſt.
Unmov'd he ſtands, againſt his worſt of Foes,
And mocks the Darts which adverſe Fortune throws;
Calm and compos'd amidſt or Eaſe or Pain,
Enjoys that true Content, which others ſeek in vain.

So ſtands a fixed Rock, lofty and ſteep,
Within the Confines of the briny Deep:
Laſh'd by the foaming Surges on each Side,
Yet can't be ſhaken by th' indignant Tide.

Then why ſhould Fantoms diſcompoſe the Mind,
Or Woes, ſo far from real, fright Mankind?
Since Wealth is but imaginary Fame,
Since Poverty is nothing but a Name;
Since both from God's unerring Hand are ſent,
Lord, give me neither, give me but Content.

HONOUR'D SIR,

I HAVE before the Time prescrib'd by you,
Expos'd my weak Productions to your View.
'T had been unjust so long to make you wait,
For what at last had scarce been worth your sight:
And only hopes for Pardon at your Hand,
Because produc'd to Light by your Command.
Haply you might expect some finish'd Ode,
Or sacred Song, made to the Praise of God.
A glorious Thought, and laudable! O then
Think on th' illiterate Soul that guides the Pen;
Ill suit such Tasks with one that holds the Plow,
Such lofty Subjects with a Fate so low.

Alas! Great SIR, was but your Learning mine;
And I, like you, a Fav'rite of the Nine;
Sacred *Parnassus'* Top I soon would climb,
And find a Hero worthy of my Rhyme.
My well-chose Subject then I'd treat with Sense,
And grace each Line with Art and Eloquence.

I would not ſing of *Troy*, or ancient *Greece*;
Of ſage *Ulyſſes*, or of *Priam*'s Race;
Or any of theſe fictious Sons of Fame;
Pagans, unworthy of a Chriſtian's Theme.
Much nobler Thoughts my grateful Voice ſhou'd raiſe,
In lofty Strains, to Great *Meſſiah*'s Praiſe:
With Joy I'd ſing of his ſtupendous Birth,
And paint his god-like Virtues whil'ſt on Earth;
Then with reluctance, horror, and ſurprize,
I'd mournfully recite his Agonies;
I'd trace the heavenly Hero to the Tree,
And ſhew how God in Man expir'd for me.
Next in Heroic Numbers would I tell,
How the third Day he roſe, and vanquiſh'd Hell;
Subdu'd the Grave, and Death victoriouſly,
And gave us Earneſt of Eternity.
Such noble Subjects ſhou'd my Lays excite;
And You, Great Patron, wou'd in ſuch delight:
Grateful to me, when you well pleas'd ſhou'd view
Th' accompliſh'd ſacred Piece inſcrib'd to you.

But in *Meſſiah*'s Cauſe I can't proceed,
Leſt when I ſtrive to praiſe him, I degrade.
My Fate, unkind, compels me to be mute,
Becauſe of Learning I am deſtitute;
By which no Thought, tho' well conceiv'd, can riſe
To full Perfection, but in *Embryo* dies.

Yet

Yet my unpoliſh'd Soul wou'd fain produce,
And bring forth ſomething, tho' 'tis of no uſe.

Thus in the Country often have I found,
(Thro' ſlothful Man's neglect,) a Plat of Ground
Waſte and uncultivated, void of Seeds.

But why ſtand I my Fate accuſing ſo?
The Field calls me to Labour, I muſt go.
The Cow lows after Meat; the hungry Steed,
Neighing, complains he wants his uſual Feed.
Then, SIR, adieu! Accept what you did crave,
And be propitious to your humble Slave.

Ann. Ætat. 25.

FINIS.